Homeless Encampments in Contra Costa Waterways: Regulatory Constraints, Environmental Imperatives and Humane Strategies

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Introduction

Nature will always be contested terrain- William Cronon

Like many counties in the Bay Area and throughout the nation, Contra Costa County is grappling with how to deal with homeless encampments. These encampments are often built in areas that are obscured from public view, at the periphery of cities and towns and near waterways. Because of this, these encampments established on or near creeks and rivers are increasingly drawing city and county water districts into the social services realm. In addition to addressing the environmental concerns traditionally associated with their work, these agencies now have to tackle the issues of urban poverty and social exclusion associated with homelessness.

Under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (CCCFCD) is compelled to reduce water pollution in its creeks. New requirements for NPDES permits set higher water quality standards at the same time that the incidence of homelessness encampments has increased, along with the concomitant pollution caused by these encampments. CCCFCD sees the existence of homeless encampments as a both the source of trash and pollutants in county waterways and an impediment to reaching its goals of reducing pollution.

To address these issues, in recent years, CCCFCCD has developed a protocol to deal with homeless encampments in its creeks and right of ways that entails collaborating with the County Sheriff, Public Health Department and Public Works Department. However, even in the best of circumstances these county agencies have limited capacity and jurisdiction over the encampments' population as the waterways involved include sites that often fall under additional jurisdictions such as CALTRANS, the Department of Fish and Game, Code Enforcement, Parks and Recreation, the

Department of Fish and Wildlife, and a variety of city agencies such as local code enforcement and city police. The fact that the areas involved include multiple jurisdictions, with different concerns, mandates and degrees of capacity to deal with social issues presents challenges that are further amplified by the fact that the camps and the people inhabiting them can and do move.

The goal of this report is, while accounting for existing regulatory constraints and environmental imperatives, to develop recommendations that can be adopted by the Contra Costa County Flood Control District to reduce pollution caused by encampments in and near creeks that are simultaneously humane, effective and practical in the long term. Any attempt at providing solutions to the problems of pollution caused by these informal settlements necessitates an understanding of the populations inhabiting these encampments. Strategies should be drafted with an understanding of the other factors at play in Contra Costa County and should include an assessment of the ways that Contra Costa and other local and state government agencies can, and have, managed informal settlements or mitigated their environmental impacts in the past.

As the quote by William Cronon indicates, this report and its proposals are predicated on the idea that the nature of society, of humans and the landscapes in which we live, are inextricably linked. Therefore this report reflects a multi-process research project. It begins by identifying the phenomena of homelessness itself in Contra Costa and elsewhere and how modern encampments have come to occupy certain spaces that raise issues for agencies not traditionally associated with social concerns. It then looks at the specific population that is living near Contra Costa creeks to determine how and why people are living in these spaces and concludes with an examination of solutions that have been implemented internationally and within other counties in the region to provide a series of recommendations that are evaluated on the basis of how effective, humane and practical implementation would be for the Contra Costa County Flood Control District.

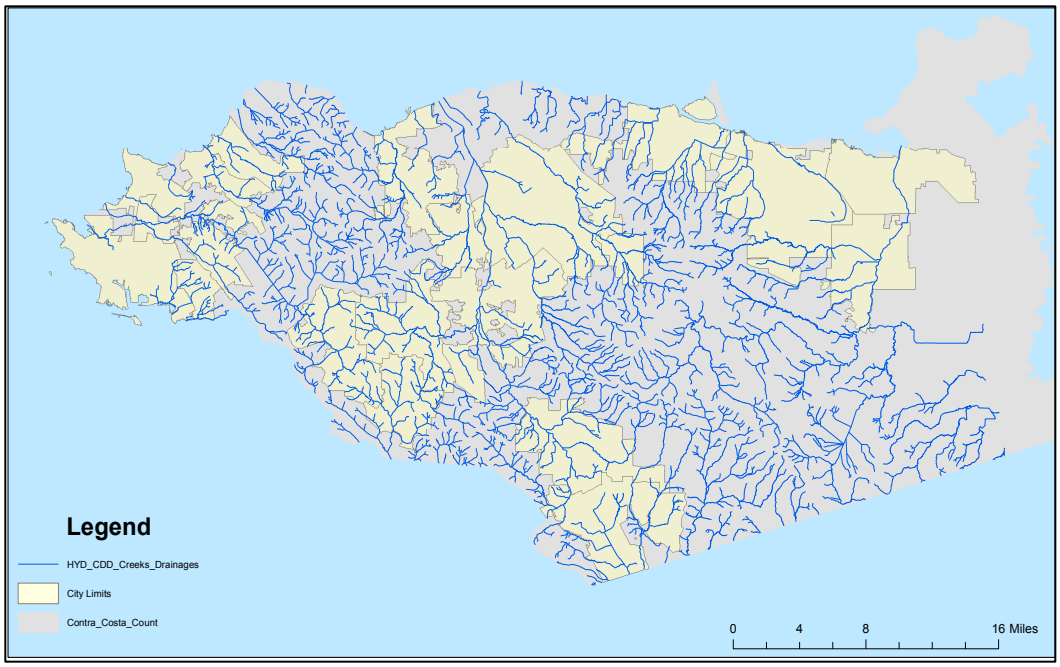


Figure 1: Contra Costa County

Homelessness in the United States

History

There have been two previous periods in the past century where the numbers of homeless grew enough to elicit national concern. The first period, which included the 'Great Depression', was in the early part of the 20th century where many of the so-called homeless lived outdoors, often on the outskirts of major cities. The second period began in the 1970s and was largely viewed as an urban, specifically inner city phenomenon that coincided with a rise in poverty concentration. The most recent phase began in the early part of this century and was notable for including large numbers of families with children as well as veterans. This recent wave was exacerbated by the housing crisis and has been accompanied by a national proliferation of laws and regulations that make homelessness a de facto status offence, through criminalization of the necessary acts associated with living in

Reduced to its essentials, homelessness is an expression and extension of poverty in the United States
(Wolch and Dear 1993, 2).

public.[1] Perhaps because of these new laws and the concurrent 'urban renewal' in major city centers, today's homeless are less visible in both the urban landscape and the national imagination than they were 30 years ago, even though, in absolute terms, the number of homeless today is greater than the 1980s.

Despite the fact that homelessness is growing outside of major metropolitan areas, much of the literature about homelessness centers on large urban areas like New York, Los Angeles or San Francisco. Although the populations living outside of standard housing that are the focus of this study do not live in large urban centers, there are themes in the urban literature that are useful to understanding some of the causes, demographics and behaviors of the homeless population located in the unincorporated areas, small cities and suburbs of places like Contra Costa County.

Causes

The national homelessness crisis that began towards the end of the 20th century has been well documented and linked to Federal failures to address poverty and the inability or incapacity of state and city governments to supply affordable housing or address increased costs of living (Jencks, 1995). The Federal disinvestment in affordable housing, mental health and social welfare or poverty alleviation that began under Ronald Reagan' s presidency has largely continued to this day.[2] Also well documented is that the shrinking of Federal anti-poverty programs coincided with the destruction of low-income housing and SROs (single residency occupancy hotels), the implementation of urban redevelopments policies and a move towards deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill. Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear trace this

[1] For examples of policing and criminalization of homelessness, see Mitchell, Don 2003. *The Right to the City*: *Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*; National Coalition for the Homeless and National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2010, *A Place at the Table: Prohibitions on Sharing Food with People Experiencing Homelessness*; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and National Coalition on the Homeless, 2009, *Homes not Handcuffs: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities.*

[2] For a brief history of social policy and poverty see *Policing Urban Poverty* which argues that the notion of a culture of poverty was part of neo-liberal move to make individuals responsible for their own welfare and eliminate the role of the state. (Crowther 1999)

history in their 1993 book, *Malign Neglect*. They note that while California led the movement in deinstitutionalization, within two decades the asylum population shrunk nationally from over half a million to 100,000. This period of rising poverty, declining welfare programs and deinstitutionalization was accompanied by a decline in the provision of affordable housing. During the 1970s and 1980s for "every three units lost through demolition, conversion or rental increases" only one affordable housing unit was produced (Wolch and Dear, 42, 87). This loss of affordable housing was matched by population growth and efforts to redevelop the urban centers, all of which led to increased housing costs for a population increasingly less capable of paying these costs.

Interestingly, all of these historical events converged to develop a wholly new social structure for dealing with the impoverished and mentally ill. By the end of the twentieth century, responsibility for dealing with the homeless was largely in the hands of local government and private or charitable organizations. Hoch and Slayton track the ways in which, by necessity, local government had to expand its provision of shelters and services in reaction to federal withdrawal of funds and leadership (1990). Gerald Daly notes that the response to increasing homelessness in the 1980s was marked by the development of "public and voluntary sectors concentrated on such expedients as emergency shelters and welfare hotels" (1996, 175). Despite the move toward 'Continuum of care' programs, (which focus on service provisions) the issue of long-term affordable housing was ignored. Today, short-term shelter provision, which had initially been advocated as one element of a three-part strategy for reducing homelessness, remains the primary policy of local government and non-profits. The Federal policies that

> *Between 1973 and 1983, 4.5 million units were removed (demolished or converted to nonresidential use) from the nations housing stock, half of which had been occupied by low-income households. During the same period, about 1 million low cost units were lost. The very lowest rungs of the housing ladder- single room occupancy (SRO) hotel units- were decimated.*
> (Wolch and Dear, 27).

helped create the demand for shelters remained unaddressed and within a remarkably short time period, the public accepted the notion that local governments were responsible for addressing poverty and homelessness (Hoch and Slayton, 1990). Wolch and Dear argue that the Federal retreat from social investments has led to the proliferation of "private, quasi-public voluntary and commercial agencies providing services hitherto supplied by government" (1993, 14). This trend is not unique to the provision of homeless services, as many social services from education, health and food supply have moved in this direction. According to Alice O'Conner's analysis of Federal policies in poor communities, we can see the current social crisis in homelessness as an extension of general poverty programs where "small scale interventions are intended to revive depressed communities while large scale public policies undermine their very ability to survive" (1999, 79). The result is a complicated and "uncoordinated system of public, private, local, state and federal funding arrangements for communities in need (O'conner 1999, 82).

Demographics

According to estimates from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in the 1980s there were 200,000 to 500,000 homeless individuals (although this obviously broad range was, and continues to be, contested as an undercount). Last year the national estimate provided by HUD was 633,782 (2012).[3] Almost 20% of homeless adults are veterans (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2002). It is important to note that although Federal and state policies and the economy itself may have made housing more difficult to sustain for many segments of the population, not all of those who cannot afford housing end up on the streets. Among the homeless today, there are a disproportionate number of people with a history of mental illness as well as histories of institutionalization in some capacity, be it foster care, group homes, or incarceration (Pippert 2007). About one-third of

[3] Many think this number way too low and estimates have been as high as 3.5million. For more on the difficulty in counting the homeless and strategies employed, see National Coalition for the Homeless, 2012 *Down For the Count: Overcoming The Census Bureau's Neglect of the Homeless*

homeless single adults are suffering from severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or manic-depressive disorder (Federal Task Force on Homelessness and Severe Mental Illness, 1992). As the numbers of homeless rose in the 1970s and 1980s, and as a tacit acknowledgement of changed social policies, a distinction was made between the 'old homeless' and the 'new homeless.' While 'old homeless' was used to describe the older white men who lived in the skid rows of larger cities the term 'new homeless' was used to describe a population that is "much more diverse, are more likely to spend time roughing it on the streets rather than skid row flop houses, include more women, minorities and children, are generally younger, have fewer resources, are more visible, and are a much larger population than the old homeless," additionally the new homeless tend to be on the streets for shorter periods of time (Hoch 2002, 5; Pippert 2007). Recent trends show an increase in homeless families and in homeless encampments (HUD, 2012).

In *Malign Neglect*, Wolch and Dear note that although there is no single pathway to homelessness, there are recurrent themes and they point to five factors that increase the likelihood that someone will end up homeless: eviction, job loss, release from an institution (mental hospital or jail) with nowhere to go, loss of welfare support, and personal crisis (32-33). Pippert argues that there are three stages of loss that individuals who become homeless are likely to experience: loss of family support, loss of ties to friends and loss of community support (2007). These factors and processes of isolation are a reminder that without networks and support " the poor cannot afford to purchase what they need to live a private life" (Hoch 2002, 226).

Encampments Nationally

Populations living in encampments are not a recent phenomenon in the United States. However, until recently, they were not seen as a significant part of the modern homeless problem. Given the relatively recent rise in homeless encampments, the literature on this population is slim. There are, however, mass media reports on encampments, many of which focus on camps located on waterways. A 2009 *New York*

Times article noted that although encampments have long existed in big cities, new tent cities or "modern day Hoovervilles" are springing up in smaller cities and towns throughout the US (McKinley). An article in *The Nation* the same year states that tent cities are becoming an increasing part of American urban life, noting that while Seattle's first tent city sprang up in 1990, it now hosts three. The author writes that these "reborn Hooververiles …are what connects us to São Paulo, Lagos and Mumbai, physical manifestations of our growing inequality and societal neglect" (Ehrenreich, 2009). And in 2012 the Oprah Winfrey Network premiered a documentary entitled *Tent City, USA* that followed the lives of homeless residents in Nashville, Tennessee whose encampment was destroyed by a flood. In 2010 the Department of Justice published a report on homeless encampments, noting that approximately 44% of the homeless are unsheltered and that 12% are unsheltered and chronically homeless. The report does not offer any estimates of the encampment population except to say that some of the chronically homeless live in encampments.[4]

Encampments in California

California is at the fore of the recent encampment development, with the encampments in Fresno and Sacramento garnering a lot of media and legal attention.[5] Much of what has been written about encampments focuses on "tent cities." Tent cities have gained national attention because they are large enough to be noticeable to the public. Although tent cities tend to be larger in scale and more entrenched than many of the encampments

> More than one in five of the nations' homeless reside in California. Four of the five cities with the largest number of unsheltered homeless are in California.
> (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2012)

[4] The Federal Government defines the chronically homeless as those who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

[5] One of the few published articles on homelessness encampments was written by a law student at Berkeley, who looks at another sanctioned tent city in Placerville, CA called Hangtown Haven. (Loftus-Farren, 2011) There is also an undergraduate thesis entitled Tent City Urbanism that profiles a few camps across the country.

in Contra Costa, many of these tent cities started as encampments. A 2010 report from the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) defines a tent city as a "variety of temporary housing facilities that often use tents" noting that "authorized and unauthorized tent cities, created by and for homeless individuals and families, are now found across the country" (8). Of the nine sites they survey, five are in California (camps include two sites in Fresno and others in Ventura, Sacramento and Ontario). Five of the six non-mobile[6] sites are on public lands and two are along the water. Nationally, the two largest environmental issues associated with these modern Hoovervilles are inadequate waste disposal in waterways and outbreaks of fires. For jurisdictions in the Western United states, waterway pollution has become the most cited problem associated with encampments (Department of Justice, 2010). According to the 2012 NCH and the Department of Justice reports, the residents of tent cities tend to be older and whiter than the general homeless population, with a higher number of veterans. The NCH report includes a survey of 97 residents and found that 75% of residents are male, 19% are veterans, 46% are 45 or older and 65% have been homeless for more than a year. Although the tent cities cited in described in the media and reports are generally larger in scale than the encampments encountered in Contra Costa, the demographics found in Contra Costa are very similar.

Contra Costa County

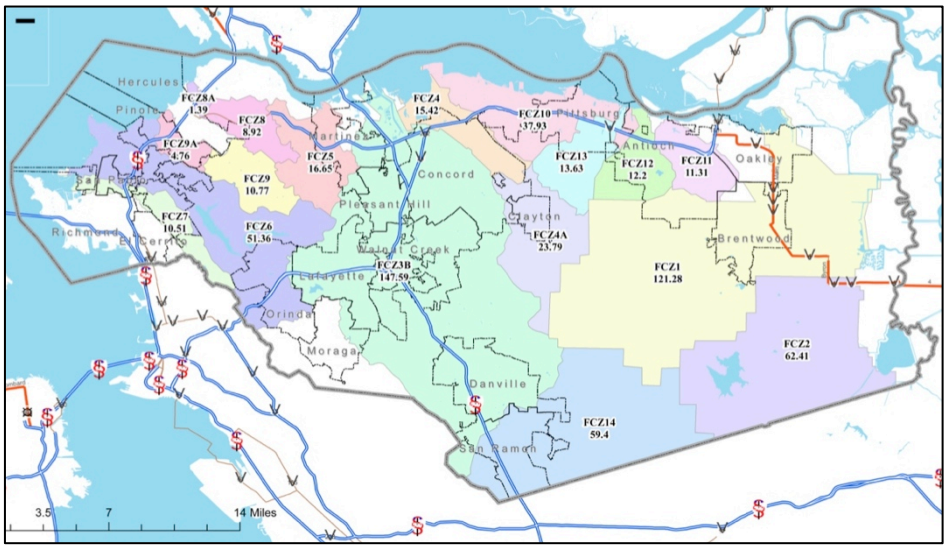
Homelessness

As with most of the Bay Area, there is a serious deficiency in affordable housing in Contra Costa County, where more than 7% of the population lives below the poverty line and the income needed to afford a two bedroom unit is $27.31 an hour ($54,000/year), more than 4 times the minimum wage and almost $20,000 higher than the per capita income. (Contra Costa County, 2004) Although counting the homeless is notoriously difficult, there are some figures available that, while obtained through

[6] The report distinguishes between permanent and mobile sites as a few of the camps rotate locations.

various methods, nevertheless offer a general picture of the landscape in Contra Costa County. According to the "2004 Plan to End Homelessness in Ten Years", Contra Costa County had an estimated homeless population of 15,000, 4,800 of whom were estimated to be on the street on any given night and 2,000 of whom were identified as chronically homeless. Three years later, the 2007 County homeless count identified 2,408 homeless people in shelters and 1,749 unsheltered for a total of 4,155. According to a 2012 Grand Jury Report, there were 4,274 homeless on any given night, 1,490 of which were unsheltered, and over 1,000 who lived in encampments. These numbers are likely to be underestimates given that Project HOPE made contact with 1,175 individual residents of encampments alone in the same year (796 men and 379 women). [7]

Water Pollution



Flood Control Zone 3B is the largest in the county and is where my research focused.

Figure 2: Flood Control Zone Areas in Square Miles

The Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District is the agency tasked with providing flood control protection throughout the county. As part of their work, CCCFCD owns land and easements on waterways throughout the county and is responsible for maintaining the drainage facilities and complying with NPDES

[7] Project Hope is a homeless outreach team that is part of ANKA, see findings below.

requirements set by the San Francisco Bay and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Boards. The NPDES program is a federal permit program that establishes standards for discharge into waters, including storm drain systems. Because Contra Costas waters drain into both the Delta and the San Francisco Bay, they have permits for both regions. One of the new requirements for the East County permit is that CCCFCD focus on trash reduction, setting goals of reducing trash in County creeks to 40% by 2014, 70% by 2017 and 100% by 2022. In conjunction with Federal policies aimed at improving water quality and protecting water habitat, increased interest in urban waterways and green spaces have made water landscapes that had long been ignored a site of social concern and ecological interventions.[8]

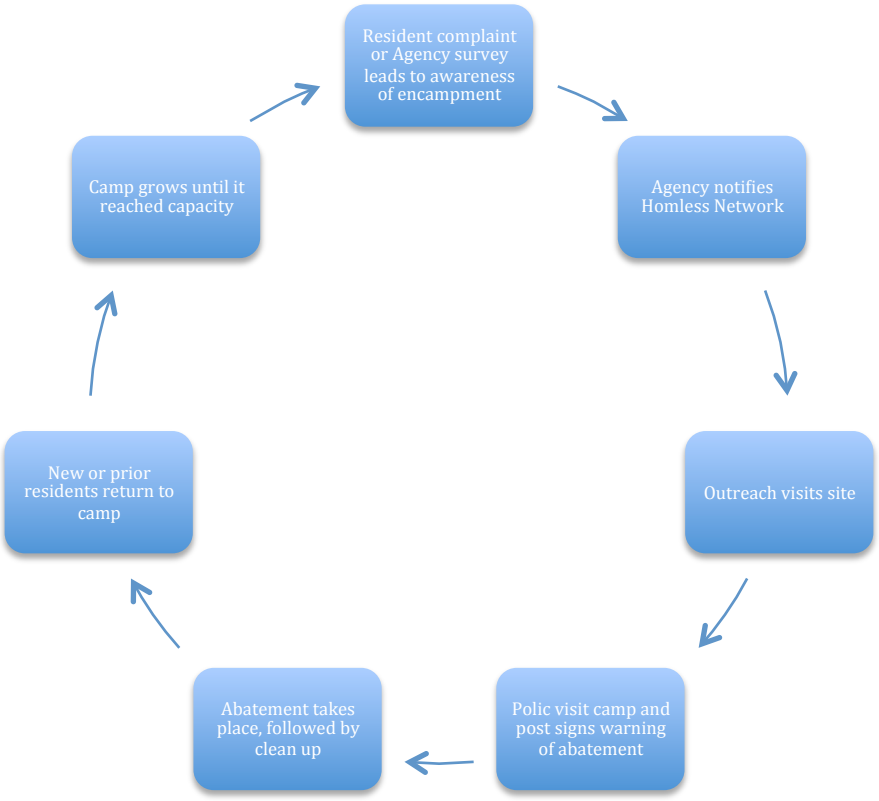


Figure 3: Cycle of Abatements According to Protocol

[8] Note that the NPDES, which regulates discharge into national water was created as part of the Clean Water Act in 1972, while the Water Quality Act was passed in 1987.

As stated above, the most visible sources of trash in county creeks stem from illegal dumping and from daily activities of homeless encampments. Because the CCCFCD has seen an increase in the frequency and size of encampments on property for which it is responsible, it has to grapple with how to deal with this situation. In an attempt to reduce the problem of water pollution, CCCFCD developed a protocol (updated in 2012) for dealing with homeless encampments in unincorporated areas of the county. This protocol requires notifying the County Health Services Department as soon as the CCCFCD is made aware of encampments. The Health Services team is then responsible for sending the HOPE outreach team to contact the residents within 24 hours. As soon as contact has been made, the responsible police jurisdiction will post notices to vacate, giving residents 72 hours to vacate the premises. The county then initiates and documents a cleanup, and any non-hazardous materials left behind by residents will be held for 30 days (during which property can be claimed by residents) prior to disposal.[9] In the past year CCCFCD has engaged in 78 abatements, many of which involved (re)clearing sites that were reestablished within days of being cleared. For example, three sites constituted 62 of the abatements in the past year.

While the CCCFCD, staffed primarily by engineers, is very well equipped to deal with the environmental and structural challenges of maintaining water quality, it is arguably less equipped to deal with the social challenges posed by the encampments set by the creeks. Further complicating the issue of encampments is that the camps near waterways are often sited adjacent to areas outside of the districts' jurisdiction. Therefore, despite efforts to collaborate with other county agencies (particularly public works and public health), efforts to reduce or eliminate camps are thwarted by encampment inhabitants utilizing the limits of jurisdictional boundaries to their advantage. Many properties owned/managed by the district are adjacent to property managed by CALTRANS, Parks and Recreation, Railroad property and City boundaries. Unfortunately, these jurisdictions do not have any coordinated policies in place and

[9] The issue of storing and or destroying personal property is one that has been raised in most eviction processes and was adjudicated in 2008 in Fresno, with the court ruling that the cities practices violated the 4th and 5th Amendment, see Kincaid v. Fresno.

tend to focus on moving people off their property, a strategy that is costly and ineffective. In order to craft more effective strategies, an understanding of who is living in these areas is needed.

Methodology

The methodologies employed in this project were primarily informed by the questions set by CCCFCD: Who is living on creek beds? What are the needs and behaviors of this population and what is their relationship with the creek? What are the various solutions local agencies can and have attempted in dealing with homeless encampments? What are the problems and benefits associated with homeless encampment and what issues are associated with various response mechanisms?

The literature on homelessness and the quantitative data provided by the county was useful in developing questions and triangulating information gathered from field observations, but the process of data collection was iterative. As my understanding of the landscape shifted, so did the scope of my research. I have relied on a variety of literature, including the work on informal settlements in international contexts (Huchzermeyer, 2004; Mertins et al, 1998), homeless ethnographies (Gowan 2010: Bourgois 2009), interagency collaboration and watershed management (Imperial 2002; Schwatz 2000), with the goal of developing a theoretical framework that would enrich the data gathered. In addition to qualitative data provided by field observations and interviews with residents of encampments, I also interviewed individuals from various agencies that work with homeless encampments about the strategies they have implemented and their assessment of their efficacy. The field work, interviews and research done on policies throughout California provided a basis for the policy recommendations made at the end of the report.

Field work/participant observation

Given the need to understand the current residents of the encampments and their behavior, a large part of the research for this project was qualitative and based on direct contact with the population through field work. Thus, in September 2012, I began to volunteer with Anka, a homeless outreach organization that works with homeless encampments in Contra Costa County. Anka is a mental health organization contracted by the county to do outreach with various at-risk populations and to provide transitional housing facilities as well as provide services in the encampments through Project HOPE (Homeless Outreach Project for Encampments).

As part of the Project HOPE team, I went out with other outreach workers and visited camps, bringing supplies and talking to residents. Anka proscribes to harm reduction theories and although the Project HOPE team is always ready to provide services and housing referrals, a lot of outreach consisted of checking in with people and offering food and supplies. We would talk to those residents who were interested in talking and leave others alone. The main staff person I worked with has been doing outreach for over 15 years and knew a lot of the residents very well. I took notes throughout the day and transcribed these notes at the end of each day. These notes included the place and time of every interaction I had with an encampment resident and my assessment of the camp. Because we revisited many camps during my time with Anka, I was able to witness both the growth and destruction of many camps and the role of agency interventions in this process. I also relied heavily on conversations with members of the HOPE team and the staff of Anka. These conversations often gave my observations a rich context, as many of the service providers have been doing outreach for decades and know the encampment residents very well. For five months I participated in outreach with Project HOPE twice a week, spending 140 hours in the field and gaining familiarity with the social and physical landscape. After five months, I began conducting formal interviews and participated in outreach one day a week.

Interviews

My notes from informal conversations and my observations helped me to create an interview instrument. Initially I envisioned conducting a broad survey of the population but as I reviewed my notes and began to draft questions, I became less certain that conducting a survey would provide the type of information I wanted to gather. As certain themes and patterns emerged, I wanted to understand the daily movements and cycles, both on and off the streets in addition to understanding social and environmental interactions among residents (see appendix). After conducting a pretest of the survey questions, I determined that conducting a sample of in-depth interviews would offer more insight into these questions. For the interviews, I identified nine people who could represent the spectrum of people I encountered in the encampments. Given the focus of my research my selection was based on where and how people lived in the different types of encampments I encountered. My interview sample is not a statistical representation of the population for a variety of reasons. First, due to the physical and mental instability of many of the residents, a statistical sample would not be practical. Secondly, my relationship with the residents is, for better or worse, mediated by Anka, an agency that only does outreach during the day and that some residents have a more positive or negative relationship with.[10] The in depth interviews served to supplement field observations and were primarily used to answer questions that came out of field observations and informal conversations with residents.

While doing outreach I began to compile a list of agencies (in addition to Project HOPE/Anka) whose actions influenced the movement of residents, either through "policing" the spaces used by encampment residents or through service provision. Based on this list I began to conduct semi formal interviews with these agency actors. Many of the interviews consisted of "tours" where the agency actor would take me out

[10] Note that as any policy implementation would require participation from residents and Anka is the intermediary between the county and the encampment residents, there may be benefits to focusing on residents who have good relations with the project HOPE staff.

to visit former encampment sites and discuss (from their perspective) the impact they had on the encampments and the types of policies they had adopted over time in relation to these encampments. These interviews helped me formulate the questions I would later ask residents and other agencies as well as informing my preliminary research on policy recommendations. From these field observations and 'tours', I went back and did follow-up interviews with many of these same agency actors. These follow-up interviews allowed me to test some of my ideas about policy interventions and get a sense of the various agencies' interests and capacities.

In January I began to interview agency actors in other jurisdictions. These interviews were generally conducted over the telephone, although when feasible, they were done in person. The agencies that I was able to interview were partly determined by response rate, although I initially reached out to jurisdictions that were (1) either similarly situated (had a comparable population, encampment size, or geography) or (2) were outliers, either in the scope of the issue or because they had implemented a novel policy. In interviews, I always asked if the subject had heard of other counties who were developing particularly interesting or innovative solutions, letting his or her response lead me to further contacts among the agencies and institutions involved with homeless encampments within CA. In this way, I deliberately used information from each agency to inform me about peer agencies.

People living in Encampments

Agency Records and Outreach Training

Through both Anka and the Contra Costa Department of Public Health I was able to review data about county clients who have been or are homeless and who rely on some county services. These clients are tracked, either because they have accepted provisions, hospitalizations, rehabilitation programs or stayed in county shelters. This information provided me statistics on movement and the retention of formerly homeless people in various housing programs. My primary use of this data was to

confirm (or disprove) any of my field observations and to better understand the variety of interventions in place with an eye towards evaluating their efficacy.

CCCFCD and Public Works provided maps of encampments they had encountered and the results of two types of waste audits they conducted. One was an actual catalog of detritus removed from encampments when they are cleaned and the other was the annual audit of what types of garbage and pollution are found in the waterways within the county (see appendix).

During my orientation with Project HOPE, I was told that there are three major types of camps in three areas of the county with distinct behaviors and social structures. My research focused on the central county area, although I visited encampments throughout the county. After about 2 months I began to recognize faces and names and was able to observe certain patterns in the movement and behavior of the residents. I visited over 50 encampments and talked with 87 people who reside in the encampments. I also conducted nine in-depth interviews with encampment residents. Most of these encampment residents are white men, the vast majority are native to the area, and almost all of them have family in the area. The majority of the encampment residents are over 45 and many of them struggle with a wide range of social, physical, and mental health issues.

Typologies

Through fieldwork I identified three types of camps that have distinct characteristics and populations with different patterns of mobility and land use. These types of camps correlate with three major typologies that can be observed within the encampment population. These categories, although neither absolute nor discrete, speak to general behaviors that correlate with residents of the camps and how the camps are organized. They can help predict something about the behavior of camp

residents, highlight the need to develop multiple strategies to address the populations and will inform the development of policy recommendations. The typologies highlight distinctions between the types of camps, where they are located, how they are occupied and the social structures that exist among the residents. The three typologies can be described as veterans, old-timers and newcomers.

Old-Timer Camps	Newcomer Camps	Veteran Camps
Under bridges, freeways, near railroad tracks, creeks and channels.	Easily accessible spaces, some obvious.	Removed from roads and paths, least accessible.
Permanent and semi-permanent structures.	Temporary structures, tents and tarps.	Elaborate order Some structures.
Strong social network of residents with shared values.	Social network but not highly organized.	Generally loners but connected to homeless network.

Figure 4: Table of Typologies and Major Features

Old-timer camps vary in size and location but tend to be located under freeways, bridges and overpasses or near railroad tracks. Every old-timer camp I visited was on or near the water. Many of these camps are also the result of transforming the landscape and have some semi-permanent structures or are dug into the sides of hills, creating problems of erosion. Old-timer camps may be visible if you are looking for them but they do not stand out in the landscape. They range in size from 2-20 inhabitants, but where they are larger people tend to cluster in groups of three or less, with a line of structures along a waterway or under a bridge. The location and size of old-timer camps may change over times but there is a tendency to return to previously established campsites.

The residents of old-timer camps are what would broadly fit the demographic of what Hock and Slayton term the 'old homeless' (1990). They tend to be single white men and chronically homeless. The vast majority of these old-timers are from the area and have family nearby although most have infrequent contact with their families. These are men (and some women) who have lived on the streets for 5-20 years. They are often the most open to outsiders, possibly because they know Anka and possibly because they are the most adept at navigating social systems. This group is the only one that self identifies as homeless. They are often, but not always, older than the newcomers. They look for places where they can reside for a while and invest in making these places homes and use their knowledge of city/county/state lines to eke out spaces where they are unlikely to be disturbed. Many of these residents are on disability, have day jobs, or are part of "recycling" crews.

Figure 5: Old-timer Camps

The old-timer camps have a social hierarchy, where the original settler of the camp acts as the Mayor and can decide who is allowed to join the camp and establishes rules that are generally designed to preserve the camp. The social norms of the old-timer camps vary based on the residents. Old-timers will drift towards camps where their behaviors will be viewed as socially acceptable. For example in some camps more substance abuse is tolerated, in some camps everyone has a job, others are populated by couples, some have pets while others do not. I interviewed a couple from an old-timer camp and they told me their motto was "we don't look homeless" and this seemed to reflect the shared ethos of the camp.

Veteran camps are the hardest to find although many of them are near old-timer camps. Veteran camps exist in areas that are well concealed and from a distance tend to blend into their surroundings, with tents or structures that match the landscape. These camps are very small in size and population, rarely housing more than two people.

Figure 6: Veteran Camps

Some of them are completely isolated, in a well-camouflaged camp near the shore of the bay or hidden under a bridge that is unlikely to be trespassed. Upon entry there may be some sort of trip wire or other devise rigged to alert camp residents of intrusions.[11] The veteran camps have a particular order to them, although it may not be immediately apparent. They are also very aware of the community of encampments around them. Some of the camps are very Spartan with only bare essentials and some are inhabited by hoarders and will have a large quantity of a particular item. Generally these camps are fairly established meaning that effort has gone into constructing the space, whether this is in the form of a kitchen built out of scrap materials, gardens, drainage built through piping or the construction of a housing structure.

The residents of the veteran camps are either veterans or survivalists and usually live alone. Ranging in age from 23-65, this group consists primarily of white men. Most of those who are not receiving veterans benefits work day labor jobs or recycle for income and most of them have dogs. These veteran camps are often located across

[11] The veteran camps I encountered were very similar to the 'separatist' camps encountered by Southard on public lands. (2008)

the river or a few hundred yards away from the old timer camps. This does not mean that they are totally socially isolated; they often have relationships with members of the old-timer encampments, however, they do not form the same sort of familial units as the other two types of encampment residents. I never encountered women in any of the veteran camps.

Newcomer camps are often the most obvious and the most seasonal. A large grouping of tents and very temporary structures would be typical of a newcomer camp. These camps may pop up in an area that had never been previously inhabited by the homeless: in the alleys behind a residential or commercial area. Because many of the residents of these camps do not self identify as homeless there is less investment in building these camps. This also means that there are fewer attempts to maintain a low profile and keep the camps clean, as the residents do not view the space they are occupying as home but as a temporary condition. The newcomer camps are often larger and tend to have more women and ethnic diversity than the other two types of camps. Less adept at navigating the landscape and jurisdictions, these residents find security in numbers. One of the outreach workers referred to residents of the newcomer camps as 'joyriders,' not because what they are doing is fun, but because they often drift back into housed situations. The newcomers are those who have only been on the streets intermittently or for a short time. They generally self identify as drug users, not as homeless. In fact, many take great pains to establish that they are

Figure 7: Newcomer camp

on the streets by choice and if they were sober, they would have somewhere to go. Many of these residents either rely on family or hustling to make ends meet.

Each of these typologies requires different approaches regarding housing and ecological remediation. Although there are some similar social behaviors that run through all camps, there are also important distinctions between camps and policies should be mindful of these distinctions.

Social Networks

> *In order to design a service delivery system for homeless populations, the social structures and help seeking behaviors of these individuals must first be understood. If we know what people on the street must seek from others who also have limited resources, we know what services are not being provided* (Pippert 2007, 15).

Social ties are very important within the camps and for the homeless generally. Almost 90% of the residents of the encampments are from the area, and were either born and raised in the region or had been here for more than 10 years.[12] Everyone I spoke with in the field and in interviews (with 3 exceptions) had family in the area, siblings, parents and about half had children nearby. The proximity to family was important even though residents were largely estranged from family, either because of issues with substance abuse or embarrassment about their living situation.[13] Some of the old-timers lived with family members in the encampments or had family members in other encampments. These relationships were generally intergenerational, involving a parent and adult offspring. The newcomers had more regular contact with their family, often in the form of financial support. Some of the veterans expressed strong emotional ties to family in the area, regardless of contact. A few residents mentioned

[12] Hoch and Slayton note that municipalities began to build shelters when acknowledging that new homeless population was native and would not move on. (1990, 224)

[13] Pippert notes that for "a variety of reasons many homeless are unable, or refuse, to seek assistance from their families of origin." (2007,5).

that they had a spouse or parent buried in the area and that was what kept them there.

Within all the camps there are functional social structures in place and with a collection of different homeless camps, social structures emerges. Although the structure within the old-timer camps was most obviously hierarchical, hierarchies exist throughout the community. For example, although veterans are generally not active participants in familial structures, they are granted a respect that a single loner might not have. Camp residents who socialize seemed to seek out similarly minded people as part of their community. Interestingly the social structure of all camps closely matches Anderson's description of camps in the 1930s or Hoch's description of the social structure in SROs which notes "a generous tolerance for social differences with a strictly enforced set of house rules" (156). This very sophisticated ability to self-select and to create social networks may be a dominant reason why bureaucratically organized homeless shelters are so unattractive.

Wolch and Dear note that although "[homeless] networks may be small, unstable, and resource deficient, homeless people are rarely without any supportive relationships. And, paradoxically, because their remaining social ties are fragile and limited, they take on increased significance" (239). Among both old-timer and newcomer camps there is a community; people commonly pool resources and loan each other things and watch after each other's stuff and pets. The old-timer camps have thicker social networks and I encountered multiple incidents where people pooled money to pay for a hotel room for a resident who was sick or a resident who had come into a little money buying food, alcohol or drugs for the whole camp. Although different camps might have a variety of rules based on community ethos and logistics regarding noise, garbage, and interaction with business, the biggest offense is "rooting" or stealing someone's stuff. Given how little homeless people own, it makes sense that this would be the greatest transgression. Every person I talked to cited rooting as a major offense.

Cultural Norms: Time

Regardless of typology, most people who live in public spaces share life experiences that create particular perceptions and relationships to social constructs. Many of the realities of life on the streets necessitate a specific way of being in the world that is distinct from "mainstream" society. Agencies and individuals who interact with encampment residents will struggle without recognizing these differences. An example that was striking throughout the camps was the distinct relationship to time held by camp residents. In one interview, as I tried to get a sense of mobility patterns over time I kept running into a wall. Finally the respondent told me "Its hard for me to judge time, you know, a month or a day. But last summer we were in Idaho." I had encountered similar vagueness in my fieldwork, when I asked people how long they had been somewhere they would often respond in terms of seasons or events (e.g.: 'Thanksgiving,' 'after CALTRANS came, ' 'before the fire,') as opposed to specific dates. One informant, when asked what he was going to do when the rains came said "I'm not future tripping," a phrase that offered a great deal of insight into how homelessness impacts and shift a persons relationship to time, a basic organizing principle of our society. While almost everyone I spoke to, regardless of employment status, has a daily routine, that routine is continually broken by irregular catastrophes (hospital visits, tents catching on fire) and influenced by seasonal changes. Therefore, while people could tell me what their daily ritual was and where they were last summer, very few could remember if they had been at their current location a few weeks or a few months. In fact, on many occasions when we were doing an intake of a new client, after learning his or her birthdate, I (or a member of the HOPE team) would do the math and say, "so you are 36/46/50 ?" and the person would respond in a surprised or puzzled tone, unaware of their current age. The sense of time for the residents seems to center around the immediate or the urgent. While talking to case managers I would often hear them express frustration with a client who had not shown up for a meeting, one that might have led to housing, health care or benefits. Part of this is a function of different time structures and part of it is an expression of

the fact that so much energy goes into survival, leaving little energy for the future. In one interview an informant reflected on how the routine of survival can wear on you. "When you become homeless, not that you like to, but because sometimes you're up all night, you sleep all day and um, you become lazy and people start to say you're not looking for a job and you look like a bum and you're not trying to being a bum. Its just that you're tired and you don't have no resources trying to look for a job…You're working: figuring out where you are going to eat, where you are going to sleep and, um, I'm not going to lie to you, it makes you tired and it makes you sleep all the time because you get depressed and you don't want to do anything because you just want to sleep your life away."

Spending so much time and energy surviving on a daily basis leaves little energy for planning ahead.[14] My construction of time became an impediment to conducting interviews as I initially tried to schedule interview a week in advance. After a month of showing up at the agreed-upon dates and times, I changed my tactics and carried my interview materials with me whenever I did outreach or arranged to meet people at some place that was part of their daily routine. Setting up appointments and meetings between agencies and the homeless to enter shelters or getting services is difficult because of the profoundly different nature of the two groups. While the agencies are uniformly bureaucratized and systematized, the homeless populations have different mechanisms for organization. These inherently different practices by encampment residents and mainstream society institutions/agencies highlights some of the difficulties embedded in their interactions, such as in the case of promoting moving from encampment to proper housing.

Impediments to Housing for Encampment Residents

There are some common impediments to housing experienced by most of the encampment residents. First, there is a lack of temporary and long-term affordable

[14] *Malign Neglect* cites a study from Home Base that points out that homeless people in San Francisco spend thirty-seven hours per week simply to gain shelter, food, clothing, and other basic necessities (1993, 237).

housing. There are two county-run shelters in Contra Costa, one in Concord and one in Richmond. Each has a capacity of 75 and residents are allowed to stay for up to 120 days if they agree to case management. Although many residents of encampments are wary of shelters, there were moments, beginning in November as winter approached and throughout the rainy months, when clients would ask for help getting into the shelters. Unfortunately, about two-thirds of the time such requests were made, the HOPE team was unable to offer the client a bed because the shelters were at capacity. However, requests are not the norm, and most camp residents have a strong dislike of the shelter and refuse to go into the shelter system altogether.

With a few exceptions there is a perception that life in the shelters is more dangerous than life in the encampments. Because, as shown above, encampment residents self select according to shared values and behaviors, there was a commonly expressed disdain for the shelter population. Shelters were described as "full of addicts" or "crazy people", places where people didn't have to be responsible, or as simply "dangerous."[15] Simultaneously, they were also described as places where one could not have autonomy, because they were full of too many rules.[16] Many of the people interviewed have formed strong kinship relationships in the camps and were reluctant to leave these relationships behind to get into shelters, which are generally segregated by sex and offer housing on an individual basis. On the other hand, a number of people formally and informally interviewed were self-proclaimed loners and avoided the shelters because there were too many people. Often when we were working with a client on prospective housing, they would lose interest if they were told they would have to share a bedroom with someone else, declaring "I don't like being around other people." However, with only one exception, those interviewed stated they would consider getting into a shelter if it was a transition into more permanent housing. Despite an aversion to the shelters, I only encountered one

[15] This sentiment closely matches that expressed by the nomadic homeless living on public lands in Southard's study (2008)

[16] Although many camps also have a lot of rules, these rules are not seen as arbitrary and are generally understood as promoting the survival of the camp.

person who articulated a preference for being outside as opposed to having permanent housing. [17]

In addition to a disdain for shelter life and its residents, most encampment residents encounter logistical impediments to entering shelters. Recycling is one of the most common ways for homeless people to earn money and it is a full time, evening job. Most recycling 'crews' would go out around 9 or 10 at night and would keep working until 4 or 5 in the morning. Although recycling is far from a lucrative job (respondents reported earning anywhere from $5-45/night), recycling is one of the only autonomous ways to earn money and the people who engaged in recycling were heavily invested in their identity as recyclers. Unfortunately, shelter programs require residents to check in during the evening and stay for the night, which sounds reasonable but it means that a decision to enter a shelter is often a decision to lose one's only source of income and an important part of a daily routine.

About a third of the people encountered in the encampments either currently had, or had in the past, owned pets and yet there are no temporary housing options in Contra Costa County where pets are allowed. Because of the tenuous social ties of the homeless population, pets are family to many, and I heard residents say on multiple occasions that being asked to leave a pet would be like abandoning a child, a loss that could create a host of new mental health issues.

Another constraint to entering the shelters is legal. Although they are a minority, I encountered at least eight people during outreach who were registered sex offenders, which is a barrier to entering the shelter system. To my knowledge, most of the registered sex offenders I encountered had been charged with crimes associated with mental illness or with indecent exposure, a crime that may be difficult to avoid when

[17] This is similar to NCH survey of tent city residents which found that the major impediments cited for entering the shelter system were lack of privacy, outdoor space, rules, lack of storage and inability to house their pets. While only 33% were willing to go into shelter, 65% would go if it led to permanent housing and 94% would accept permanent supportive housing. (2010, 73)

you are living in public spaces. This status means that even those who are interested in shelter are often unable to be placed in housing.

The majority of the homeless population is coping with multiple mental health diagnoses; many suffer substance abuse problems as well as trauma, both from experiences on the street and from prior life experience. In a seemingly endless cycle, the high rate of mental illness is exacerbated by the trauma of living on the streets and the heavy substance abuse that goes with it feeds back into the apparent rate of mental illnesses. While Wolch and Dear note "substance abuse is an adaptive response as well as a risk factor in homelessness," the high rates of addiction and mental illness make the population very unstable and a client who is totally eager to get into housing one day may react in anger at the suggestion when you visit them the next (1993, 241).

While most resident agree that shelters are undesirable places to live, they also share some ideas about what types of camps are more or less desirable. However, there are important distinctions between communities that are expressed in what they feel makes a site a good or bad camp. Part of the assessment is environmental, and part of it is based on social structure within the camp and they way the camp interacts with the outside world.

Landscape of Encampments

For the most part, the urban and peri-urban spaces occupied by the homeless are peripheral and marginal spaces. In Nels Anderson's book *On Hobos and Homelessness*, he describes the parts of the city occupied by the homeless. His description is as true of the camps I encountered in 2013, as they presumably were when he wrote his account in 1923:

> On the outskirts of cities, however, the homeless men have established social centers that they call "jungles" places where the hobos congregate to pass their leisure time outside the urban centers. Jungles

> are usually located in close proximity to a railroad division point, where the trains are made up or where trains stop to change crews and engines. Accessibility to a railroad is only one of the requirements of a good jungle. It should be located in a dry and shady place that permits sleeping on the ground. .it is well that the jungles be not too far from a town but far enough to escape the attention of the natives and officials (1998, 43).

As with the Hobo camps described by Anderson, most camps exist at the edge of the city limits, close enough to provide accessibility to resources but far enough from the center to avoid the public eye. Most camps are under a freeway or on a creek or both. Throughout fieldwork and in my interviews, the residents of the camps provided assessments of what constituted a good camp or a bad camp, just as residents of any area would have a definition of good and bad neighborhoods based on their needs and values.

Good camps

Good camps are located away from urban centers, either on the edges of the city or in low density, peri-urban or suburban areas. Many camps are located near light industrial or commercial areas, where there tend to be large lots without much foot traffic. This allows people to avoid high visibility and the accompanying harassment. Camps are organized along lifestyle choices but there are strong networks connecting different camps to each other. So when someone makes a life change; and gets a job, or starts using drugs, they may move from one camp and join another, but there continues to be communication and fluidity between camps. When a big event occurred that affected the homeless population, almost camp residents knew about it right away. For example, there was an incident where a police officer shot a camp residents' dog in Concord (an event that appeared to have gone unnoticed in mainstream media) when we visited camps in Walnut Creek and Antioch the next day, people were talking already about it.

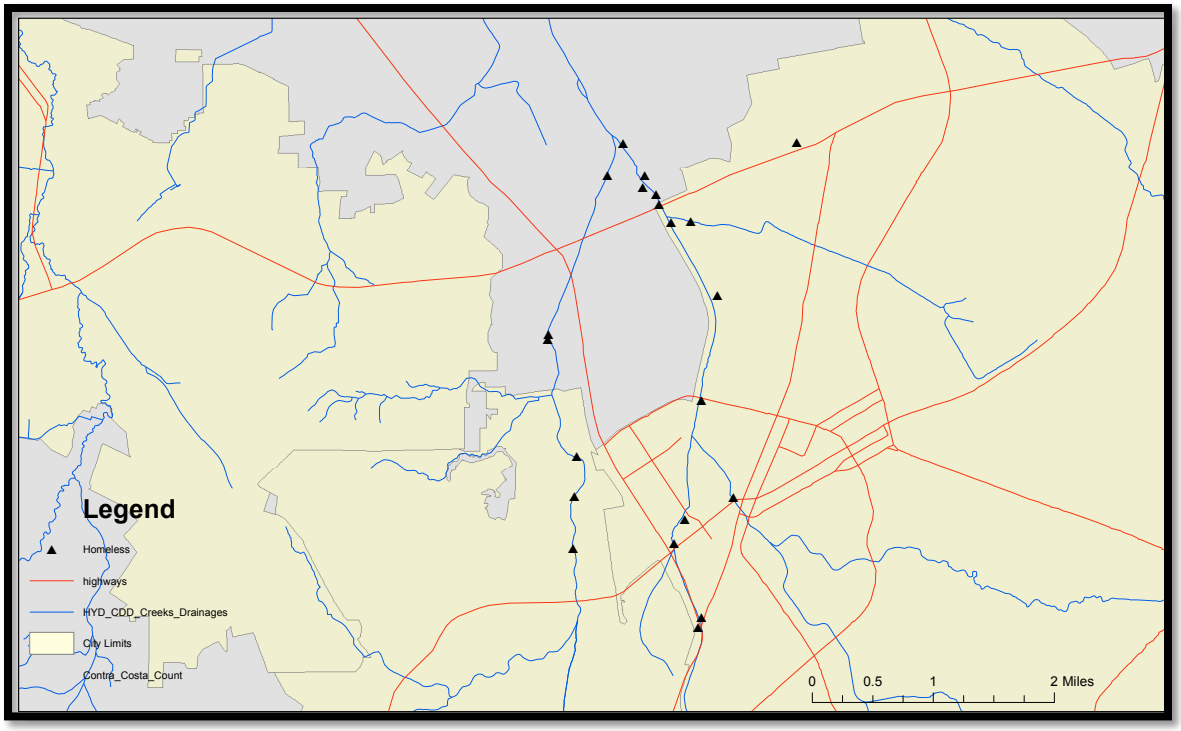


Figure 8: Camps in Relation to City Limits, Creeks and Highways

Good camps are protected by old-timers and veterans, who will work more actively to prevent discovery by trying to maintain order and keep "messy campers" out. When I asked people what made a good spot for encampments the answers tended to be about privacy and safety. Fences are appealing because people feel safer if there are inside enclosed areas. For women, camping near or with others was desirable as it was seen as safer. Almost every woman I spoke with had been a victim of violence, and aside from domestic violence (which was always downplayed), they attributed it to being alone, away from their camp or being alone in their camp. All the women expressed a greater sense of safety in their camps than on the streets or in shelters. Being near bridges, highways and creeks creates a sense of privacy and provides white noise, making it easier to ignore neighbors. Being able to find spots where harassment was minimal is also key, which is another reason these camps tend to be far from heavy pedestrian traffic or residential neighbors. Creeks are mostly appealing because they often exist on publicly owned lands that have been neglected by the general public. Availability of resources for setting up camps was also key, and a few

informants talked about locating near large commercial or retail centers whose garbage they would scavenge either for recycling or for materials to set up their camps. "Get cardboard from warehouses but you have to know the right ones, pallets too. Its best if you can camp near those." On my first day of outreach I was told by a member of the outreach team "wherever there is water there are encampments," when I asked why, she was unsure, stating that although people do not admit to drinking the water, she thought they used it for washing and cooking. In my conversations with residents, one person mentioned fishing and a few mentioned the quiet or peacefulness of the water but no one admitted to using the water. In the summer being near the creeks was seen as desirable so it is possible that people use the water in the summer to cool down, although no one in my interviews talked about this use.

Being near services was also a benefit, and I met a few clients with serious medical needs who chose to set up camps near their health care providers. A striking example was an older man who slept in a dumpster container behind the dialysis clinic that he went to 3 times a week. The lives of residents center around the resources they use and daily routines involve these resources. Places that served food were anchor points for many people and they spend part of every day visiting these sites or the MSCs (multi-service centers) that provided showers, laundry and health services to clients. Bicycling is the primary mode of transportation. All the residents use bikes although they do not all own bikes, some of them borrow bikes from other encampment inhabitants. Transportation seems to be an important constraint and issue for the subjects. Even in 'good camps' there is a lot of transience and very few residents had been in a location for more than a few months, although some kept returning to the same places year after year.[18] There were some places that had a seasonal habitability

[18] The notable exceptions to this were some camps in Martinez, Walnut Creek and Antioch, where some residents had been in one camp for years, often living a very low profile life with the complicity of city officials.

and this played a role in the location decisions as did law enforcement.

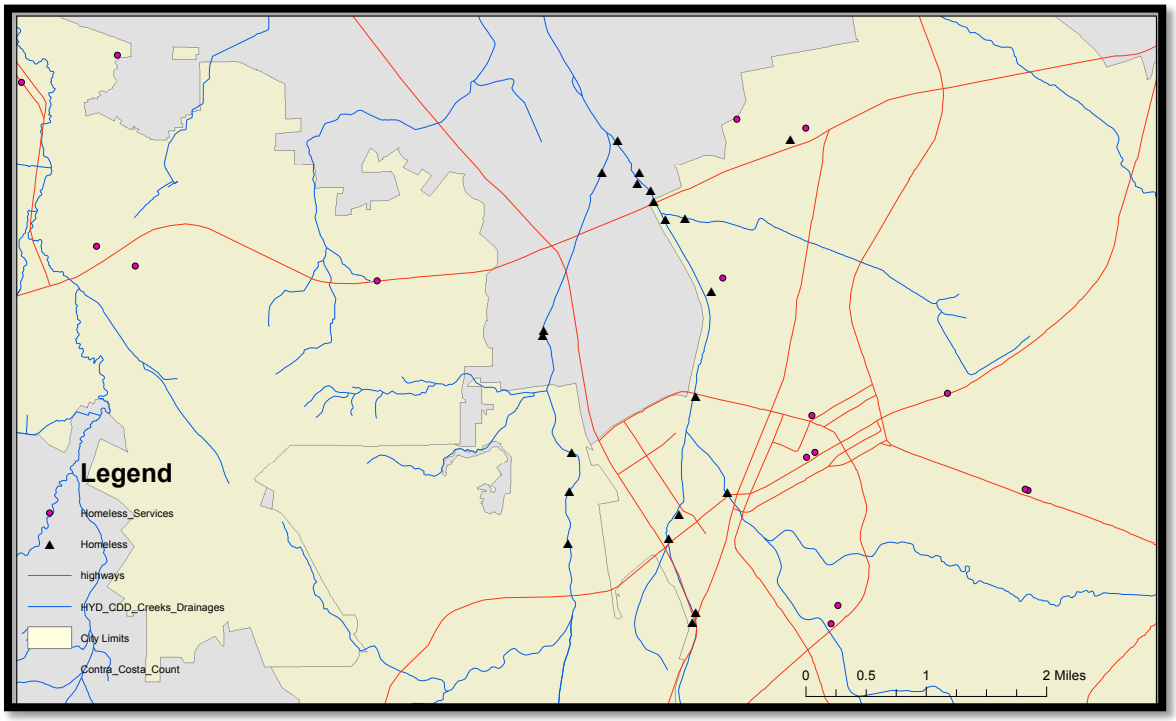


Figure 9: Camp Locations in Relation to Services

Bad Camps

With the exception of two loners, all the old-timers and veterans and most new-comers were aware of the risk of flooding and most had experienced camp floods. I interviewed two couples who, although recently homeless, had settled into old-timer camps and both of them had initially set up camps in areas where flooding was likely to occur. After the flooding one couple returned to the same spot and the other couple sought permission from the camp leader to move to a recently vacated spot on higher ground. It is worth noting that the couple that returned had developed a beautiful camp and were making a calculated risk assessment based on how often the area flooded. In fact within the old-timer camps there was a distinction between types of flood risks and there were certain areas that were completely avoided during the winter months because the water was liable to rise so quickly it was viewed as too great of a hazard.

Good Camps	Bad Camps
Away from city center and residences **(lower risk of eviction)**	**Prone to eviction**
Not visible from outside/fenced	**Exposed to the public**
Near services (for newcomers and old-timers **Remote location (veterans)**	
Stable population	**Too many people** **Too much garbage**
Low flood risk	**Likely to flood**
Weather protected (cover)	**No rain or sun protection**

Figure 10: Camps and Key Features

For all residents there was a maximum capacity that made a camp unappealing. Many people talked about how they would move when a camp got too big, and what constituted 'too big' was specific to the location of the camp and the type of residents. A camp could become uninhabitable if it increased above a certain numerical size or if people came to the site that did not share the lifestyle patterns or values of the other campers. I had a few old-timers describe abandoning a site because it had become populated by young 'tweakers' (methamphetamine users). Within all camps there seemed to be a general familiarity with the jurisdiction of the various agencies. Multiple people mentioned moving camps when it became too full of garbage as that could yield an official crackdown. An area that was too high profile for any reason also rendered it undesirable as a campground. Among old-timers who were interested in staying put, the preferred jurisdiction was city property, because as long as the relationship with the police and property owners was positive, "they would leave you alone." There was a general sense that county would also leave you alone as long as you kept your camp clean. CALTRANS was generally the least favored agency to deal with after Federal Agencies (whose presence was less frequent) because they are known for not going through the protocols of retaining campers' personal property during evictions.

SPATIAL PATTERNS

In *Malign Neglect*, Wolch and Dear highlight the importance of place and mobility among homeless communities, noting, "the geography of homeless communities is shaped by mobility patterns." (1993, 273, 240) Although they are focusing homeless population in urban settings in the 1980s and 1990s, many of the drivers of homelessness in the semi-urban areas of Contra Costa County are the same, and while they play out in different ways, the importance of mobility remains key. Wolch and Dear distinguish between voluntary and involuntary mobility or what are called 'spaces of prescription' and 'spaces of negotiation.' While I think it is important to acknowledge the coercive element of much of the movement of the homeless, the line between what is voluntary and involuntary is unclear (1993). Although flooding or policing may force residents to move location, they continue to exercise agency in deciding where and how they move.

One of the most important manifestations of mobility is the use of constant movement to avoid harassment or assault.[1]

To distinguish between the types of mobility among the population, I have grouped them into frameworks: *individual cartographies*, the daily movements of the population as it navigates networks and makes use of resources yet stays close to anchors and *migratory patterns*, cyclical patterns that either force populations to leave an area or offer opportunities to move elsewhere. Migratory patterns are generally used to describe movements in nature and because the residents of encampments are living outside, many of the factors that influence their mobility are what we think of as natural factors (heat, cold, flooding, erosion). Additionally, implicit in the concept of migration are notions of self-preservation and a spatial temporal element, both of which are key here. It is important to pay attention to the cyclical patterns of spatial relocation because the movement of the population is not linear and whether a camp is evacuated due to seasonal changes or because of policing, there is always the

possibility that residents will return. Equally important is the notion of self preservation, there is an internal logic to both the migratory patterns and individual cartographies of encampment residents as they are making rational choices about when and where to move based on their needs and the options available to them.

Individual Cartographies

The concept of individual cartographies borrows from the work of Cloke, et.al., who argue that while the much of the literature on homelessness focuses on the "regulatory control of the spaces in which homeless people dwell and move," there is tactical agency exercised by homeless people that can be mapped, not just in terms of their routines of movement within geographies of service provision, but also of *pauses* (non movement) that demonstrate an expression of alternative social networks and "a practical knowledge of the micro-architecture of the city" (Cloke, May, Johnson 2010, 8). The personal cartographies of the encampment residents include a practical knowledge about the ecology of place and strategies for navigating these spaces in a way that also includes a temporal aspect.[19] Cummins et. al. cite recent work in the field of geography that highlights how access to

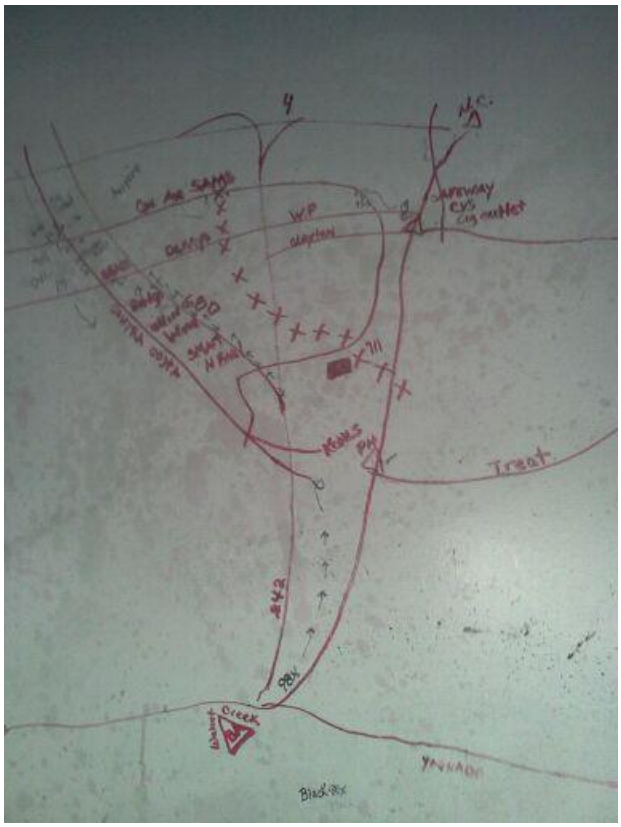


Figure 11: Map of Residents Cartography

Image found on the wall of a recently cleared new-comer camp outside of Walnut Creek showing a residents anchors and pathways between sites and the camp

[19] Cummings et. al. refer to this as relational place and points out how space cannot be separated from the people navigating these spaces.

goods, services and assets is as much a question of relational geography, social networks and power as it is one of proximity, noting that "the characteristics of areas and the people within them are dynamic in time, as well as in space." (2007, 1828) The spaces frequented by the encampments residents were largely social and service oriented. Most had a daily routine. These regimented routines are very important to people. Most of the routine involves survival and a lot of waiting. Meeting with case workers, getting free meals, going to a MSC to apply for jobs, check mail or do laundry, but part of the routine often involved doing something mundane like getting a hot dog at a particular place or going to a specific park and spending time with friends or simply riding the bus, activities that enable people to exist outside of their status as a homeless person. In a life that seems unstructured but is often determined by factors outside of the control of the homeless, these activities serve both as anchors to normalcy and articulations of personal agency. Many of the sites that were part of the personal cartographies included: county offices, MSCs, the brown bag, parks, Fishes and Loaves locations, Fresh Start, churches, homeless highway, the Rescue Mission, and Hillside.[20]

Migratory Patterns

Seasonal migrations influence where and how camps are formed, which in turn impacts how the camps are policed from outside. We know that many newcomer residents are happy to move into shelter when the weather gets cold but the shelters do not have enough space to hold them. This means that for this group, it may be more effective to do outreach in winter than the summer season. There are also some camps that are inherently temporary whereas others are institutionally entrenched, either because they are such good camps or because they are well established in the collective memory of encampment residents. Distinguishing among the different camps is important for understanding what policies will be most effective.

[20] Many of the tent cities reported in the media are located near services. An article on the problem with encampments in Santa Clara county notes the irony that a homeless camp is 100 yard from social services http://silichip.org/2012/12/ although this actually makes sense.

Over the past few months I have watched many old-timer and newcomer camps get established, usually started by one or two people who l set up an area, often spending a few days cleaning the area in the hopes that it will keep them off the agency radar. Once there are more than two people, the camps grow quickly, especially if they are centrally located. After a while the area will become either too crowded or too dirty for the person who originally established it and that person will find it easier to move elsewhere. In the meantime, the camp will continue to grow and once it is visible if often grows at a faster pace, especially if the site was well chosen in terms of being shielded from the elements. The growth of the site usually stops due to agency intervention or eviction. On the other hand there are some camps that have existed undisturbed for years and while I visited more than 50 camps, most of which were near creeks, the county has only interacted with 10 in the past year.

Most people interviewed in newcomer camps were fairly sanguine about the concept of future evictions, while residents of veteran and some old-timer camps were not. After an eviction newcomer camps seemed to be the least affected since many would come back to the same spot within weeks or even days. I interviewed one woman from a newcomer camp the day after her camp had been cleared by CALTRANS and she joked about them being a free maid service despite the fact that she had lost her ID. This attitude was reinforced when people would talk about garbage and capacity. They expected that as a camp got too big or dirty, it would get cleaned up. And for many, as long as they did not lose their personal effects, clean ups may be welcome. This was less true in the old-timer camps, where a lot of effort was often put into building the camp. I visited one camp with an outreach worker who was trying to find a veteran client and he commented how you could tell that this was a good camp because so much care was taken to keep it clean and hidden. Some of the best spots were well-guarded secrets, especially those located in desirable locations.

After a storm or abatement many people are ready to get off the streets, particularly newcomers. Their desire was immediate and they would often settle for situations

that they would have rejected in the abstract one day before. Most of the clients in the Concord/Martinez area would refuse to entertain the idea of going to Richmond, but when they were really interested in shelter, they would go to Richmond if a bed was available. The members of the outreach team often talked about how unlikely they were to get someone off the streets unless they met them during a moment of crisis and were able to provide them with resources at the instant. Thus timing is of the essence when thinking of possible agency actions to be taken in order to promote change.

Agency Interviews

As part of this project, I Interviewed ten agency actors in four counties (both city and county officials) in California who are grappling with homeless encampments in their waterways about the policies they have in place. I also researched policies in other counties throughout the US and spoke with these agencies outreach staff about the interventions they had seen over the years and their perception of impediments to housing people. Every jurisdiction is grappling with a different set of questions and problems but there are some common threads that came out in the interviews. The people I interviewed were primarily from County water districts, although I also interviewed homeless outreach workers in Contra Costa and Santa Clara County and staff from Public Works, city Code Enforcement and CALTRANS.

Nobody complains about a clean camp
-Marin Water District

Main Issues

There is general consensus that the issue of homeless encampment has grown in recent years. Interventions that were advocated included implementing sanctioned tent cities, implementing shopping cart ordinances, involving homeless in clean up, reducing vegetation cover, and better policing. Both Marin and Santa Clara worked

with homeless outreach coordinators to provide housing for encampment residents and Santa Clara stated that of the 33 of the 50 encampment residents accepted offers of housing vouchers provided. Many people felt that police crackdowns were forcing people out of the city centers and onto county property and many water districts talked about how they did not have enforcement capacity (police) to ensure that camps that were cleared and cleaned did not resurface.

Interagency Collaboration: Challenges and Advantages

Every person I spoke to largely equated the success and failure of their program to whom they collaborated with and how well the collaboration functioned. The two counties and one city that felt they were addressing the problem in an effective manner, (Vallejo, Marin and Santa Clara) had begun to work with outreach providers and everyone cited collaboration as important in dealing with camps. Similarly the agencies that had developed protocols that involved interagency collaboration felt that they were effective in their interventions. The biggest constraints for these interagency collaborations cited were: jurisdictional complexity, funding, capacity, lack of consistency across agencies, lack of housing and services for the population, inadequate mental health or substance abuse services and legal constraints.

The interviews confirmed the need for long term planning and collaboration and highlighted the ad hoc manner in which local governments are currently addressing this issue. Although the importance of collaboration was acknowledged, all the collaborative efforts in place tended to be vertical in nature, and either involved multiple county agencies, county agencies and city police or county agencies and non-profits. Despite the intersections with state and federal agencies, no one was involved in horizontal collaboration. Because many of the creeks and channels in the region are near highways, railroads and parks, the county agencies are often dealing with areas where the residents can easily cross a channel or fence and enter state or city jurisdictions, yet these agencies do not collaborate. The literature on interagency

management suggests that one of the best ways to encourage successful collaborations is to tie it to performance evaluations (Daley, 2008).

There is general consensus that the issue of homeless encampment has grown in recent years. Interventions that were advocated included addressing aforementioned constraints as well as: implementing sanctioned tent cities, implementing shopping cart ordinances, involving homeless in clean up, reducing vegetation cover, and better policing. Both Marin and Santa Clara worked with homeless outreach coordinators to provide housing for encampment residents and Santa Clara stated that of the 33 of the 50 encampment residents accepted offers of housing vouchers provided. Many people felt that police crackdowns were forcing people out of the city centers and onto county property and many water districts talked about how they did not have enforcement capacity to ensure that camps that were cleared and cleaned did not resurface.

Recommendations

Given the political social and economic landscape, there is no single solution for addressing homeless camps and pollution. However there are multiple strategies and tactics that may be employed to reduce the problems. Some tactics may be implemented by the individual agency, but most will depend on the implementation of complementary tactics and new strategies for effectiveness. Based on the premise that understanding what paths other countries have taken in order to solve the problems created by informal settlements and urbanism may offer some insights, the following section will present first some of the strategies employed internationally and within California. It then highlights some potential strategies and tactics to be implemented in Contra Costa County (or by the CCCFDC) as well as providing examples where these have been implemented. Possible limitations of the proposed interventions will also be addressed.

Homelessness in an International Framework

There are a few reasons to place the question of homeless encampments and water pollution in the United States within an international context. The first is that as much as has been written on homelessness in the United States, very little of the literature address populations living in waterways or the environmental issues implicated. Yet internationally a lot has been written about environmental pollution and informally or inadequately housed populations such as squatter settlements and slums (Huchzemeyer 2004; Fernandes 2001). The second is that there is a long history of informal settlements in ecologically sensitive areas internationally and this has led to many state interventions, including ones that attempt to address both the ecological and social dynamics at play. Informal settlements, squatter settlements or slums have long and complex histories in various parts of the world and these histories are specific to the countries where they are situated. Although the scale of informal settlements in the international context usually much larger than any encampments or tent cities within the United States, in terms of governance and environmental protection, there are lessons that can be learned from the international context

Informal Settlements

In a 2009 UN Habitat report, the authors note that informal settlements are a growing part of our landscape and require new modes of governance and suggest "partnerships with informal economic actors to manage public space and provide services have helped to address the challenges of informality" (1990). Informal settlements and squatter settlements have been part of the urban and peri-urban landscape in the developing world for the more than half a century and they are mostly attributed to urbanization, poverty, lack of affordable housing and inadequate planning (Hare and Barke, 2002). In Brazil informal settlements have been part of the

landscape since the 1940s (Huchzermeyer 2004).[21] In the 1970s the World Bank began lending money to countries in what was then called the 'developing world' to support upgrading projects, sites and services in an effort to address urban slums and settlements. (Jimenez, 1982) At this time "sites and settlements' focused on preventing the development of slums, while 'upgrading' was seen as developing infrastructure for these same slums. Both these strategies were employed on a project-by-project basis with limited success. By the 1980s the problem of informal settlements had become widespread in many countries, particularly in Latin America India, and parts of Africa and prevention was seen as impossible while infrastructure development was too costly. By the 1980s, the World Bank moved away from funding these projects.

While many of the settlements of the mid twentieth century were located within city centers, rapid urbanization and sprawl meant that for the most part, more recent settlements sprang up on the outskirts of cities. These new settlements tended to be in areas that were less attractive to developers or agriculture, on steep slopes or in flood plains, prone to natural disasters near protected public lands. (Fernandes) As Martins et al note "illegal land occupation mostly occurs on public land of limited value (1998, 21). By the 1990s the failure of earlier efforts to eliminate these settlements led state

Figure 12: Settlement on Hillside in Rio

[21] See Macedo noting these efforts were often supported by military operations and land speculation and were largely unsuccessful as the new housing tended to be far from jobs and infrastructure and the pace of construction failed to keep up with the growing needs. (2000)

and aid agencies to focus on creating formal agreements with residents of settlements.

Fernandes writes that" [r]egularization or formalization implies granting legal title to people occupying land as well as investing in infrastructure upgrades. The first, [regularization] exemplified by Peru, emphasized the legal right to land, the second, exemplified by Brazil, combined title and infrastructure with social services" (2001, 3). As the density of settlements in places like Brazil, South Africa and India grew despite formalization strategies, a new discourse about hazards and ecological concerns began to emerge and today there is a growing recognition that informal settlements "often occur in environmentally high-risk areas, such as on steep slopes or in flood plains, where residents are threatened by mud slides and floods" (Mertins et al 1998, 5) and that these settlements "both contribute to, and suffer from, the health consequences of an unsafe water supply" (Macedo 2000, 31). These settlements often spring up on low-lying lands and riparian areas; the storm water and the human and solid wastes proceeding from them flow untreated into the urban water source (Falkenmark and Widstrand, 1992).[22]

Acknowledging the above led to the implementation of different strategies. Relying on both ecological and economic analysis, policies today are complex; they tend to focus on risk management and are often implemented at a local level (Macedo 2000). In some cases the failure of titling programs to mitigate environmental problems led local agencies to focus less on current residents and more on the provision of affordable housing to prevent future settlements. In Brazil, for example, there are three complementary strategies: *Morar Favela*, which involves granting credit to favela residents, *Morar Sem Risco*, which tries to relocate people from high risk environments and *Favela Bairro*, which tries to improve conditions and infrastructure in settlements (Hare and Barke, 2002). Additionally programs like those in Brazil and Columbia, rely

[22]See also Barragain and Litoral, arguing that urban growth has led to settlements in marginal habitats with the highest natural risk (2001, 889)

on risk management over relocation. Recognition that these settlements have negative impacts on environmentally sensitive areas and that the population most immediately and adversely affected by these impacts are the residents of the settlements has also led to new programs that engage the residents themselves in environmental management (Hare 2002). The shift toward risk management strategies and incorporation of multi-sector collaborations and community involvement are useful frameworks for Contra Costa.

STRATEGIES

Like many counties, Contra Costa County is already engaged in interagency and community collaborations. These strategies are essential for addressing the question of homelessness in creeks as the traditional bureaucratic and disciplinary categories provide inadequate tools for resolving complex problems that engage multiples sectors and must rely on a variety of knowledge bases. Therefore, while these strategies are not new, it is worth emphasizing the need create more robust and nuanced mechanisms for their application.

Interagency Collaboration

As highlighted in the international context and reinforced in agency interviews, there is an increased interest in interagency collaboration as a mechanism for addressing complex environmental and social problems. (Imperial, 2005) As trends have put increased responsibility for addressing complex issues in state and local agencies, interagency collaboration has become the focus of a lot of literature, particularly in the realms of management and public health (Daley, 2008). Addressing pollution of creeks caused by homeless encampments implicates both the question of waterway management and public health so it is particularly relevant here.

Interagency collaboration is advocated as an important tool for improving governance when "capacity for solving problems is dispersed and when few organizations accomplish their mission by acting alone. (Imperial 2005, 282) Advocates of

interagency collaboration note that this strategy is key for agencies "facing continued financial constraints and increased responsibilities" (Daley 2008, 479). However, as Imperial notes, while the "polycentric structure of our federal system creates opportunities for collaboration, it simultaneously imposes constraints that limit practitioners abilities to exploit an inter organizational networks collaborative capacity. (2005, 283) While building partnerships across levels of government may be a rational strategy for "managing local resource constraints" its efficiency is less recognized for agencies with separate missions whose issues overlap. Despite the acknowledged difficulty of establishing these collaborations, successful ones have been shown to improve "cost effectiveness, improved decision-making, leveraging resources, policy innovation and change, capacity building and job satisfaction (Imperial, 2000).

In the case of Contra Costa County, interagency collaboration should include both the formation of regional water district coalitions (building off of coalitions that are already in place), as well as horizontal and vertical collaboration across agencies where practical. This would mean in addition to collaborations like the homeless council, there should be collaboration with CALTRANS, EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and City agencies, and that agencies like the Bay Area Flood Protection Agencies Association (BAFPAA) should consider collaborating on homeless encampment approaches. While formal collaborations (both horizontal and vertical) are generally resource intensive, informal collaborations are easier to implement and many agencies are already engaged in these through resource sharing and communication. These types of collaborations may be most effective without strong state leadership. Some of this was implemented in Contra Costa through the Homelessness Inter-Jurisdictional Inter-Departmental Work Group, which involved city and county official's police, nonprofits and homeless people. However after developing the encampment protocol, this group has been less active.

Many municipal Flood Control Districts throughout the region (and the county) are being forced to address homeless encampments and although there is some selective

information sharing, they are mostly doing so on a county-by-county basis. However, many of Flood Control Districts share mandates, are trying to mitigate the same problems and face similar structural constraints. Creating regional bodies to share resources and strategies would be very useful in this regard. Not only would it enhance the capacity of the individual agencies, but also where there is consensus, it would amplify the agency voice. I heard many county official mention how some of the policies they would like to implement would meet stiff resistance from the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, who are concerned with species restoration. However, with a regional consensus, the water districts might be able to argue for targeted vegetation replacement or a reconsidering of the ratio based approach to habitat management.

Example

In an article entitled "Overcoming Locally Based Collaboration Constraints, " Margerum looks at a state plan in Oregon that facilitated the creation of watershed councils. These voluntary councils included both public and private lands and were tasked with building working plans to implement enhancement and protection activities. Each watershed council was part of a regional coordinating council, which had participation from state and federal agencies. This model provides a useful framework and engages all the relevant jurisdictions. In 2012, Santa Clara began an interagency collaboration that was funded in part by the EPA to address the homeless in Coyote Creek. Although the EPA is not directly involved in the implementation, Federal support is significant but the implementation involves vertical collaboration with homeless outreach workers, the water districts and city council.

Limitations

There are state and federal mandates regarding both water quality and housing provision that could be leveraged to encourage interagency collaboration. However, because these collaborations take a lot of time and work to implement and local agencies are often overextended, it is unlikely to take place without direct incentives. Although California is home to the largest homeless population, it currently does not

have an interagency council on homelessness and the state is unlikely to take the lead on this issue.

Community Collaboration

Given the shrinking budgets of most local governments, the importance of non-profits and charities has grown in maintaining social programs and environmental stewardship. These non-governmental organizations play a valuable role in extending the capacity of agencies, but they also help to engage and educate the public about issues, often fueling political support for programs and policies. The literature on watershed management highlights how important volunteer councils and agencies are in maintaining and evaluating implementation of projects. Since the 1970s there has been a growth in movements to 'restore' urban waterways and clean rivers and creeks that had long been ignored (Purcell, Friedrich, Resh 2002; Mann 1988). This new environmental imperative, stemming in part from a desire to maintain some open space within cities has led the proliferation of watershed councils and volunteer cleanup and monitoring efforts across the U.S. As Schwartz notes, creek restoration is a unique environmental movement in that it is largely managed by local advocates, who have come to the issue out of an interest in a space that they want to manage (2000). Internationally, the incorporation of residents of settlements in policy efforts has played a great role in determining the success of these efforts. Of particular interest is a study of risk management in a peri-urban settlement in Columbia where the author found that strong governance and community based collaboration are not mutually exclusive and if designed correctly, can help reinforce each other.

Example

On a river restoration in project on the Yuma River in Arizona in 2012, the landscape architects working on the project decided to work with the homeless living along the river. One resident was hired as a river guardian and those who were not interested in assisting with river restoration relocated to other parts of the river. Currently, many

programs that provide food and resources to the homeless are volunteer driven and have proved to be important resources in facilitating programs. The River Haven tent city was the result of a community process that engaged residents of an encampment as well as volunteer organizations. The tent city itself is funded by the city and camp residents and staffed by members of a local charitable organization.

Limitations

Community participation is a difficult undertaking in any circumstance, but becomes much more challenging with a population who functions outside of many formal social structures. Any collaboration with the homeless would require an understanding of the distinct practices and norms of this population. Additionally, although volunteer organizations have become key, they often lack the institutional continuity of governmental agencies and may experience high personnel turnover, especially in terms of homeless services provisions. While the agencies are uniformly bureaucratized and systematized, the homeless populations have different mechanisms for organization.

TACTICS

The section below highlights some tactics that could be used to reduce the occurrence of encampments or of the pollution associated with the encampments. These tactics require sensitivity to the migrations and personal geographies of the residents, and many of them will require complementary efforts. Seasonal migrations influence where and how camps are formed, which in turn impacts how the camps are policed from outside. We know that many newcomer residents are happy to move into shelter when the weather gets cold but the shelters do not have enough space to hold them. This means that for this group, it may be more effective to do outreach in winter than the summer season. There are also some camps that are inherently temporary whereas others are institutionally entrenched, either because they are such good camps or because they are well established in the collective memory of encampment residents. Distinguishing among the different camps is important for

understanding what policies will be most effective. For an assessment of what tactics are more likely to be effective at certain times of year, which populations they would impact and what other policies might undermine or reinforce their implementation see appendix E.

Abatements

Abatements or evictions are the most common response to homeless encampments, and although they have an immediate effect, they are also costly and cyclical, especially for well-established sites. In order for the process of eviction to have any long-term effect, both the population living in the camp and the attachment to the specific site need to be understood. There is a general sense among agency actors that abatements are only temporarily effective. In 2012, Contra Costa engaged in 78 abatements of camps, 62 of which were in 3 sites. This will continue to be true without the implementation of other strategies, however it is not equally true for all camps. The degree of attachment to a particular site and efficacy of abatements will depend on evaluating the population located at the site and the characteristics of the site itself. The targeting of camps should be based on a suitability analysis that includes both the factors that are important to the county as well as an assessment of what residents consider important in establishing the camps as these factors offer some indication of how attached residents may be to certain places, and therefore how effective an abatement will be. From the perspective of the agency there are areas where the environmental damage, safety risks or political backlash caused by encampments is severe enough that strategic abatements are necessary. However, unless solutions are made available to people in terms of offering places to go, abatements will not work as people will just move from one site to another and the county will be engaged in an unending pattern of moving people from one site to another.

> You can't get rid of the homeless, but you can set boundaries.
> -Outreach worker

When abatements occur, they should involve coordination with outreach and any agencies that have jurisdiction over adjacent property. Outreach should be responsible for making contact prior to the abatement (5-7 days before) and the provision of shelter should accompany the abatement. Following the abatement, coordinated monitoring between agencies should be in place to (1) ascertain the success in shelter provision and (2) ensure that residents do not simply move across political boundaries. From the perspective of an encampment resident the distinction between Amtrak police, the Sherriff, CALTRANS and the water district are not very significant but many of these agencies have nothing in common except for this issue and their policies differ. The adoption of a protocol that covers all forms of contact with encampment residents and is adopted by all agencies so that residents are able to predict how agencies will interact with them, creating consistency would be beneficial in creating predictability. Over time, this consistency will become part of the collective knowledge within the community and would make many future interventions more effective. Where they occur, the effectiveness of evictions will depend in part on what other policies are in place and on the specific population of the camp. Therefore strategies to reduce or evict encampments need to consider the population that is living within the camps.

Newcomer camps: With newcomer camps, working with outreach organizations will be less effective as the population is so transitory they are unlikely to have established relationships and the eviction will likely be more effective. These camps are not as physically entrenched, so abatements/evictions are not as traumatic and the residents will have an easier time relocating. Because these camps present less rigidly structured social relationships as well as less familiarity with agency actors, it is important that the process proceed in stages. The person who is there on Monday is unlikely to alert everyone in the camp of an impending eviction on Thursday. However, because of the transitory nature of these camps, they are likely to be full of garbage and property left by residents who are no longer located on site, so where collaboration is possible, it can greatly reduce costs as residents will be able to

diminish the amount of property that will need to be tagged and held for pick up. Additionally, due to transient nature of this community, these residents are likely to be willing to move on if more appealing options are made available to them. Therefore abatements at newcomer camps should be accompanied or preceded by provisions of housing. Newcomers are not as adept at navigating jurisdictions and the therefore landscape or design based policies are least likely to impact them because they are not embedded in once place. But design solutions may deter this group may be from starting camps because newcomers often have other resources and may not be as accustomed to living on the streets. Many newcomer camps may be effectively eliminated or reduced through evictions, especially in the winter as rains and flooding make finding safe and comfortable places particularly challenging for residents who are not as familiar with the landscape

Old-timer Camps: For old-timer camps there is a strong social network so movement is likely to require more time, but residents are also connected to outreach and therefore are less likely to be hostile to outreach if approached appropriately. For some old-timers, overcoming barriers to housing may be enough to move them off the streets, for many others however, evictions are unlikely to have any effect other than shifting populations to new locations. Many of the old-timer camps produce a lot of garbage and dig into the sides of the embankments, exacerbating erosion. However, many of them are also likely to be willing to modify their practices if other options were available. Given this, targeted clean up projects may be more effective.

Veteran Camps: There are in fact many more resources available to veterans than most other camp residents, but many of the unsheltered veterans have mental health issues and a deep distrust of the VA, which prevents them from taking advantage of the resources. Many of the veterans are eligible for housing and other programs through the VA but may be reluctant to take advantage of these programs, an expression of both their mistrust of the state and their pride in self-reliance. With veteran camps there is generally higher hostility to outsiders and outreach may not be

useful. For many residents of veteran camps, mental health issues are severe, so any outreach should include people accustomed to working with this population, especially given that some of the camps are armored against intrusion and may pose safety risks to unwelcome visitors. The veteran camps are also less problematic from the stance of water pollution as physical sites are low profile and tend to be highly organized.

Examples

In Santa Clara, the county has begun to bring members of an outreach team to abatements, and the outreach team provides immediate housing for those willing to go to drug counseling. According to my interview and the minutes of a county meeting, of the 50 people offered housing as part of their pilot project last year, 33 accepted on the spot. Marin also works with a transitional housing provider who makes contact with residents of encampments before the county agencies go in and offers housing alternatives. This collaboration has led to a reduction in recurrence of encampments. Ideally both regulatory and outreach agencies would be in synch and collaboration would anticipate and mitigate the other factors that influence the spatial patterns of the population, targeting the population in a way that provides an approach that is both consistent and multifaceted, with an understanding that the typologies will respond in different ways to outreach and eviction.

Limitations

Until there are more housing options and shelter policies in place to make shelters more attractive to residents, most old-timer and veteran residents will continue to live in encampments. Evictions, without collaboration among jurisdictions, constant policing, the provision of housing alternatives or attention to the typologies, will have short-term effects at a high cost.

Landscaping Solutions

There are two ways that landscaping could be used as a tactic for addressing camp pollution. One would be to make sites less attractive to potential encampment residents and the other would be to try and make it harder for pollution to enter the creeks. We know that remote areas are more attractive to camps because they avoid public scrutiny and harassment. Based on the history of creek and river restoration projects, certain design features, especially those that increase recreational use of the landscape, tend to decrease incidence of encampments, however, these populations usually simply relocate to other areas. These designs could include lifting vegetation canopy, sloping floodplains and constructing pedestrian pathways near creeks Another idea would be to create designs that make accessing or polluting the water less likely by creating impediments. This could mean building barriers or increasing slope on creek beds and selective vegetation/tree planting.

Examples

The San Francisquito Creek watershed council originally formed to deal with homelessness and trash found on the creek. Ultimately the council grew and was able to redesign the area around the creek, increasing its recreational value and use through trail and bike path installations and in 1997 the creek was cleared of homeless encampments. The clearing coincided with the opening of homeless shelter in the area. [23]

Limitations

Despite work carried out by the watershed council in the late 90s, San Fransiquito continues to experience encampments. So while many river restoration projects instigated by citizens that try to remove homeless encampments from their area have had initial success, without dealing with underlying social problems, the camps either

[23] It is worth noting that the shelter that was opened recently closed, which may explain the recent resurgence in encampments in the area.

return or simply move elsewhere.[24] This is especially problematic for a water district as the population is likely to move to another space along the creek or waterway. Design features can also have unintended consequences. For example, fences, a common feature used to prevent trespassing, are often a sought after feature of encampment residents as they provide a sense of security and a place to keep animals.

Garbage Collection

A multi-agency garbage collection program should be implemented, funded in part by the agency but facilitated by an outreach or aid organization. This inter agency program would provide specially marked garbage bags to encampment residents with one consistent pick up day per week. Homeless outreach workers could distribute the bags. Residents who used the bags to clean the encampments would be given some form of nominal compensation, for example the provision of bus tickets. Old-timers would likely participate in such a regime and some would likely clean up sites that were not their own. Even without compensation, the provision of garbage bags and garbage pick up would be embraced by some of the old-timer camps, but providing nominal compensation would encourage others to do the same.

Examples

This type of program has been implemented in the 1970s with great success in Curitiba, a city in Brazil, that experienced massive urbanization and with it the rapid expansion of informal settlements. Although this program targeted children in the favela, the underlying need was similar. Many of the residents lived in informal settlements that did not have garbage collection. In 1971 the city of Curitiba began a program where they placed garbage bins in the favelas. Anyone who deposited a bag of sorted garbage was given a bus token and anyone who deposited recyclable materials was given tokens that could be used to buy food. Within three years, 200 tons of garbage was being collected and recycled. Similarly, in 2011 Santa Clara County started a project called Downtown Streets Team. Run by a not-for-profit, the

Downtown Streets Team hires homeless people to clean streets and environmental habitats in exchange for housing vouchers, food and services.

Limitations

Unlike the populations of informal settlements in the developing world, a large portion of the homeless population in the United States have mental health and substance abuse issues, making the implementation of a program like this more challenging. For example, the Street Teams project requires all participants to attend multiple trainings to ensure a degree of commitment and functionality among participants, but this is a bureaucratic hurdle for many.

Shelter Reforms

Using the impediments to shelter articulated by camp residents provides a list of ways in which shelters could be made more appealing to camp residents. These include the creation of a kennel for pets, run by the Humane Society or one of the multi-service centers (where many homeless people go on a regular basis and where services are made available). There are a few shelters in California that allow pets and this could be another option, although it is logistically more challenging. Allowing residents to enter the shelter system together instead of on an individual basis could have a positive impact. Many residents are reluctant to leave their partners on the streets and although these relationships may not always be healthy, loss of community is a major impediment to the healthy adaptation of formerly homeless people.[25]

Examples

Lark-inn House in San Francisco is a homeless shelter for youth with a capacity of 40. In addition to services, the shelter has a kennel for pets. Los Angeles, San Mateo and San Diego Animal shelters have programs where they will provide temporary shelter

[25] Pippert notes hat because many homeless survive by recreating families in pair bonds, homeless policies need to address the necessities of these units rather than focusing on the individual

for residents of shelters for victims of domestic violence. Both Los Angeles and Riverside recently opened shelters that have kennels for pets (2012 and 2011). The kennels in Riverside are staffed by animal service volunteers and the pet owners are responsible for the care of the pet. The San Fernando Valley shelter in LA is a partnership with Petco and PAWS/LA.

Limitations

Many homeless do not have pets and although a high proportion of those in encampments do, the successful implementation of this type of program will only effect a fraction of the population.

Affordable Housing and Tent Cities

Unfortunately the cost of living in the Contra Costa region is high and is likely to continue to rise. Given this, the provision of affordable housing options is key to preventing and addressing homelessness.[26] Most of the people interviewed would be unable to afford market rate housing in Contra Costa even with a full time job. However, as Christopher Jencks notes, "the main benefit of housing is that it gives people a place to live," it does not deal with many of the other needs of the homeless population. Adequate mental health and substance abuse support, life skills training and job training are also important (1994, 121). The Federal move away from transitional housing and towards an emphasis on permanent housing has merit, but has not been adequately financed and without service provision or addressing the increasing costs of housing in many regions, the homeless population will continue to grow. At the end of *Homeless* Jencks lays out an argument in favor of the construction of cubicles for the homeless. Noting the common aversion to shelters, Jencks argues that the provision of these cubicles would be more appealing because adults would have a private space with a lock on the door. In many ways his arguments for the cubicle could be made in support of tent cities and two of the agency interviews

[26] Quigley shows a 10% increase in rent correlates with a 6.5% increase in homelessness (2001)

raised the idea of constructing a sanctioned homeless space, either in the form of a campground or a tent city.

Example

One of the tent cities profiled in the NCH Tent City Report is called River Haven and it more closely conforms to what Jencks describes in that all residents pay rent ($250) and are provided with small domed structures that are private, some occupied by couples and others by individuals (2010). The cost of maintaining the camp is covered partly by rents with the city paying the difference by contributing $14,000/year to house 25 people. The housing is available for 2 years and all residents are required to work with a case manager. Sixty-eight percent stay for 7 months or longer; 80% leave with stable income and more than half move into permanent housing. Interestingly River Haven was formed by the city in response to an encampment that existed on a rived bed that was prone to flooding.

Limitations

The biggest problems with sanctioned or unsanctioned tent cities is that they tend to grow very rapidly unless controlled, creating strong NIMBY backlashes and their growth usually leads to serious safety concerns. Of the tent cities profiled in both the National Coalition for the Homeless Report and in *Tent City Urbanism*, most were dismantled after reaching a certain capacity point or creating enough logistical problems for the non-profit or government agency managing the space. The only sites that have continued are those that provide security, services and have a cap on both the size of the site and the length of time a resident can stay. Although homeless encampments are becoming a more common part of our political landscape, the scale and size of these settlements remains small compared to settlements in other countries. Therefore any policy suggesting that these settlements are inevitable is going to meet strong political resistance both from homeless advocates and from those who believe that stronger policing and enforcement can reduce the problem.

Conclusion

The question of how to address homelessness in waterways is a wicked problem, one that no agency can resolve alone.[27] Coming up with agreeable resolutions will require creative thinking and a reframing of the issues. Because of a strong resistance to recognizing that existence of homelessness is likely to be part of the landscape of American cities and suburbs, many of the strategies employed by municipalities and cities continue to emphasize short term stop gap interventions over long term planning (Daly, 1996). Unfortunately, public housing has been federally defunded and cities today are resorting to the same strategies they employed in the 1980s.[28] As cities resort to stop gap measures and policing to deal with homelessness, it is likely that more homeless will end up on public lands or unincorporated areas that Counties are responsible for serving.

Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water District (and other water districts) face a huge challenge, one that is unlikely to disappear any time soon. Perhaps the largest impediment to resolving the question is the fact that even where the complexity is grasped and there is a willingness to address the systemic issues implicated, the local agencies that are dealing with the problem do not have the capacity to implement many meaningful measures alone. This means that in addition to contending with rigorous environmental requirements, the specific characteristics of the populations within the encampments and the particular landscape of the area, competing mandates, jurisdictional complexity and political pressure the agency must also implement strategies that involve other government agencies, non-governmental agencies and charities. All of which requires time and money, something that most county agencies today do not have in excess.

[27] The term wicked problem was coined by Rittel who argued that unlike some of the problems posed in science or engineering, the societal problems that planners face are inherently ill-defined and do not have clear solutions. (Rittel and Webber, 1973)
[28] See recent New York Times article (Berger 2013)

Given recent economic trends and the shrinking role of the Federal government, it is likely that the need for local agencies to address complex issues that involve working with landscapes and populations who reside within and outside of local political jurisdictions with severe financial constraints will continue to grow. Addressing both social and environmental goals requires a new interdisciplinary framework and new types of collaboration. Although implementing effective multi-sector collaborations that rely on local knowledge of the specific environmental and humane needs is difficult, it is not only needed to address this particular issue, but may serve to address many of the complex social and environmental problems that face our communities. Therefore, while crafting appropriate responses that rely on new strategies of implementation and stakeholder engagement may offer an opportunity to reduce the pollution caused by and incidence of homeless encampments, it might also create mechanisms that can be used to address other complex issues that face local agencies.

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Credits

All photos taken by Saneta Devuono-powell and Mark Boucher except Figure 12: Informal Settlement on hillside in Rio de Janeiro, from BOL Noticias, Associated Press Felipe/Dana. Retrieved at http://noticias.bol.uol.com.br/entretenimento/2011/01/20/caminhos-da-reportagem-exibe-especial-sobre-as-chuvas-no-rio-de-janeiro.jhtm

All maps created by Saneta Devuono-powell except Figure 2: Contra Costa County Flood Control Zone Areas created by Mark Boucher

Shapefile of homeless camps provided by CCCWCD

GIS data from Contra Costa County Mapping Information Center. Retrieved at http://www.ccmaps.us

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